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DE RUEHAB #0735 1611020  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 091020Z JUN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0966  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3886  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1703  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1570  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2139  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2590

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000735

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EEB  
COMMERCE FOR HEUPER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV ECON EINV SOCI TX  
SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: PRICEY WHITE MARBLE SUMMER CAMP  
OPENS

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: On June 9, President Berdimuhamedov opened the Nebitchi children's summer camp, a high-class resort for kids located outside of Ashgabat. The state-of-the art white marble facilities, fun activities, and amusement park-class waterslides make Nebitchi an attractive place to spend part of the summer. However, at over \$100/10-day stay, this camp will be out of reach for all but the wealthiest and/or most indulgent Turkmen families. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (SBU) On June 9, President Berdimuhamedov presided over the opening ceremony of the "Nebitchi" (Oilman) children's summer camp in Gokdere village, about a 40-minute drive outside of Ashgabat. The camp was a joint project of the Turkmen Oil State Concern and the Turkish Bashyazijyogollary Inshaat Gyda (BYZ) construction company. The owner of BYZ, who had flown in from Ankara for the ceremony, told us that the project cost \$14 million and had been built at cost. He decided to forego any profit, because children's camps are a particular interest of Berdimuhamedov. The owner of BYZ said that his company has five other projects in Turkmenistan and hopes to expand even further.

¶4. (SBU) The camp is composed of five large white marble structures, including a large outdoor amphitheater, a dormitory, a sports center, cafeteria, and arts/culture building. The dormitory resembles a three-star hotel for kids. Each room has four twin beds, with gender-specific bed spreads (blue in a boys' room, pink in a girls' room); large armoire; and hotel-class bathroom with shower. The arts/culture building had a moving "nodding donkey" oil well drill sculpture in the lobby -- a sign of its link to Turkmen Oil State Concern. There are also classrooms for painting, carpet and dressmaking, and music classes. Several classrooms have computers where children played various games, but none of the computers were connected to the Internet. On the top floor is an auditorium. Children playing dutars performed for the president. Afterwards, the audience watched a video of the president at a cavalcade of

opening ceremonies around the country. He rewarded two of the performers with a box of chocolate each.

¶15. (SBU) The grounds included two large pools replete with waterslides. The larger of the slide complexes was as good as one would see at an amusement park in the United States. Near the smaller pool was a sculpted plastic cliff, with eagles and plastic deer, that was reminiscent of a Disneyland attraction.

¶16. (SBU) According to one of the officials who escorted the diplomats at the opening ceremony, parents can sign up their children for 10-day stays at the camp for a little over \$100/session. (NOTE: According to Embassy local employees, a typical price for summer camps is about \$35/month. END NOTE.) The official said he was thinking about sending his own children for part of the summer.

¶17. (SBU) COMMENT: The average monthly salary in Turkmenistan for government workers is slightly less than \$200/month at the current exchange rate. It is unlikely that many parents could afford to send their little ones to camp for the current asking price. This will be a camp for the very well-off. And will likely stay mostly empty, despite the gleaming campus and wonderful amenities. END COMMENT.

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